

AOA HIGHLIGHTS

Note: Please keep in mind that links to some outside publications mentioned in AOA Highlights work for only a few days and after that many publications no longer provide free access.

FAA/NATCA Contract Talks

Extended: You may recall that in mid-March, the Federal Mediator granted a ten-day extension of the contract talks between the FAA and NATCA. Later, another extension was added on top of that. We're not sure when that expires. Meantime, the good news is that both parties are still talking. Let's hope they can come to a voluntary agreement because that would make life easier on all of us. And, frankly, I would like to change the subject.

Flight Plan Performance Update: The Administrator met

with her executive team earlier this month for the regularly scheduled review of the agency's progress in meeting the Flight Plan performance targets.

Of our 30 performance targets under the four Flight Plan goals (Increased Safety, Greater Capacity, Organizational Excellence, and International Leadership), one is red and three are yellow. The "Commercial Air Carrier Fatal Accident Rate" is red. "Operational Errors," another Safety performance target, is yellow. Under Greater Capacity, "Average Daily Capacity" at the 35 OEP airports is yellow, and in Organizational Excellence, "Cost Reimbursable Contracts" is yellow.

The Commercial Air Carrier Fatal Accident Rate

target for the end of the fiscal year (Sept. 30, 2006) is a three-year rolling average of 0.018 fatal accidents per 100,000 departures. Through February, the rate was 0.022, a phenomenal rate, when you think about it, but not good enough because we keep raising the bar. What got us into the red is that commercial air carriers had two fatal accidents in December and another in January.

To refresh your memories, "red" means this performance target is in serious trouble – not that we can't get it up into the "yellow" or even "green" target by the end of the year, but the further we are into the fiscal year the more difficult this becomes. Yellow means the target is not yet where we want it,

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but if we do things right, we can still achieve it. In fact, we are meeting two of the yellow performance targets (Operational Errors and Average Daily Capacity), but not by enough of a cushion to call them green.

Pinkerton Leaving the FAA:

Sharon Pinkerton, FAA's Assistant Administrator for Policy, Planning, and Environment, left the FAA toward the end of the month. "While we will miss Sharon, we are extremely grateful for the outstanding contributions she made to FAA and aviation during the past three years," the Administrator stated in a message to all employees. "She will be a tough act to follow," the Administrator added.

Until a replacement is found, Nancy LoBue, the Deputy Assistant Administrator

for Policy, Planning, and Environment, will be serving on an acting basis.

When All Else Fails, Just Sit and Think:

It was faintly amusing to watch myself and others come to work at FAA headquarters a week or so ago and find out we couldn't get access to Lotus Notes, Internet, and Microsoft Word. After a short spell of hyperventilation, I took out a notepad and tried to write a *News Update* for posting later. I didn't get past a few, disconnected doodles on the page. The link between my brain and writing by hand was apparently severed long ago. I can't "think" and write that way anymore, not even a short, simple message, without a great deal of extra time and effort. Okay, then, but what about doing all those

things you say you don't have time to do because you're always on the computer? Didn't touch those either. Something is wrong when we get so dependent on technology that we can't perform productively without it. Some might say – with it as well, but we would prefer not to go there.

Variations on a Theme: In a recent *News Update*, we included 11 steps on "How to Be a Failure" from the book *The Big Moo*. One of our resident wags/cynics (whose name will not be divulged to protect the guilty) came up with an FAA version that stems from long experience in the agency, he says.

— Keep secrets.

— Be certain you're right and humiliate (publicly if

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possible) those who disagree with you.

— Set aggressive deadlines to satisfy those above you—then blame others when the deadlines are not met.

— Avoid testing your theories – ignore inconvenient information, capitalize on anecdotes as proof.

— Focus more on what people above you think and less on whether your idea is as good as it could be.

— Assume that your idea will work (and move on before it is implemented, but only after collecting your award).

— Dumb down any difficult issue into no more than 6 easy-to-digest bullets for “on high” briefings – they don’t have time to deal with complexity.

— Realize that people who don’t instantly get your idea are bull-headed, shortsighted, and/or stupid.

— Spend more time on your presentation style than on the substance (slick PowerPoint slides work every time).

— Insist that you’ve got to form a “tiger team” or “task force” to get something done (and to have someone to blame for missed deadlines – see #3 above).

— Always go for the low hanging fruit (then collect your award and move on – see #6 above).

Get Out of the Office!: In another *News Update*, I pondered the perils of getting trapped on the 10th floor of the FAA headquarters building and not having a regular real-

world check of what we send out to the public and employees. One reader said, that’s easy – get out of the office and visit facilities. Hard to argue with that.

In that same vein, here’s an excerpt from previously mentioned *The Big Moo* about the dangers of staying inside one’s comfort zone and the need to break out of it.

“The reality... is that in a world of disruptive innovation, where the premium is on continuous creativity, the enclaves of the corporate elite are more prisons than perks. They not only keep the rank and file (and all of their ideas) out, they keep leaders in (and closed off from a universe of opportunities to learn and grow).

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“There’s a simple fix: Get out. Seriously, Get out! Get up from behind your desk and get out of your office. This isn’t about taking a vacation or ‘management by walking around.’ Those are all important activities, but they’re not how the future is created. You have to go much further than that. If you want to do anything new in the marketplace, you’ve got to get as serious, rigorous, and creative about renewing yourself as any other aspect of your business... You may be master of your domain in your office, but chances are you’re also a victim of your mastery. Too often in the business world, we preserve and revere experience when we should be challenging and renewing it.”

The Last Word: Finally, on a much lighter note, two

jokes from a couple of art/philosophy nerds, whose names will remain anonymous to protect the guilty.

Claude Monet is talking to Peter Paul Reubens about one of his latest paintings. ‘How would you fix this?’ Monet asks. Reubens steps back and responds, ‘Look, Claude, if it ain’t Baroque...’

Okay, but stay with us, there’s more... Rene Descartes is having dinner in a restaurant. The waitress asks him whether he would like more coffee, and he responds, ‘I think not.’ And he disappeared.” Bada boom, bada bing. Pretty bad, I know. Sorry. Maybe I ought to release their names.✈

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